

Chairman Arntzen, Committee Members, Good Afternoon

My name is Gwen Massey. I am from Gallatin County where both City and County Animal Control Offices have no record of a bite from a pit bull for as long as they can recall and they express their total lack of support for this bill.

Dogs are dangerous. And they are more dangerous to children then they are to adults. Not as dangerous of course as front-porch steps or kitchen utensils or five gallon buckets or bathtubs or strollers or stoves or lamp cords or coffee table corners or Christmas trees or children's toys. Not nearly as dangerous as playground equipment or skateboards or bikes or baseball or soccer fields or parked cars or swimming pools. And obviously dogs can never compete as hazards with fathers or mothers or sisters or brothers or aunts or uncles, grandfathers and grandmothers or friends or guns or cars. According to the CDC fatal injuries to children caused by caregivers average about 826 per year...by dogs 10. For those of us who are visual learners if we use the sole of my shoe to represent death by dogs, the remainder of my height can stand for death by caregiver. And remember we're talking about all dogs on the bottom of my shoe, not just the breed category that HB 191 seeks to eliminate.

HB 191 is multi-flawed on so many levels, but I only have time to talk about the first. It begins with designation of its target.

- (a) a Staffordshire bull terrier;
- (b) an American Staffordshire terrier;
- (c) an American pit bull terrier;
- (d) an American bulldog; or
- (e) **any dog that has been registered at any time as a pit bull terrier or has the physical characteristics that substantially conform to the standards established for the breeds listed in this subsection (2) by the American kennel club or the united kennel club.**

The American kennel club lists no fewer than 59 physical traits for the AmStaff. (It also lists the behavioral traits in the breed standards, things like "confidence, zest for life, eager to please, courage and love of children".) but of the 59 physical traits you can find 30 or so, a majority of these traits, in dogs ranging from Dalmations to Labs to Boston Terriers to Dobermans. It is never a good thing when any legislation casts a net so wide it can be stretched to catch almost anybody. And don't be fooled with ideas of DNA/gene testing – even the companies own advertising can only claim 84% accuracy.

But lets say you did believe that these dogs are born, bred or trained killers and you did have the hundreds of thousands of dollars it would take and you could succeed in ridding Montana of every Staffordshire bull terrier;

- (b) an American Staffordshire terrier;

(c) an American pit bull terrier;

(d) an American bulldog; or

(e) any dog that has been registered at any time as a pit bull terrier or has the physical characteristics that substantially conform to the standards established for the breeds or any dog who looked like one...

...here's the bottom line: It wouldn't make any difference.

It doesn't take a lot of time, intelligence or resources to breed scrappy dogs. Just pick the scrappiest dogs from litters and breed them with similarly reactive individuals, make sure they are undersocialized, neophobic, abused, pushed and threatened into growling, snapping, snarling and biting and then rewarded for this behavior. And if we have clever criminals doing the breeding they'll widen the physical characteristics to make it harder for the dog police to take their dogs. We'd be back to square one at three to five years at the most. Going after the dogs instead of the bad guys just doesn't make sense.

There are horrible stories about children who have been hurt or killed but the logic of eliminating an entire classification of dog which the American Temperament Society rates at 83.9% (equal to the golden retriever and beagle) for the actions of a very few is the worst possible sort of reasoning.

Thank you.

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Mr. Massey  
10030 Happy Acres Road  
Bozeman, MT  
59718  
(406) 600-0702